

Engaging with Islam

THE DEATH OF JESUS - SESSION 12

They said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God"; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ about this are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of certainty they killed him not. (Qur'an 4:157, Yusuf Ali)

PART 1: Preparation and Discussion

The Qur'an's description of Jesus is not historical: It has no details of when and where he lived; it identifies his mother as Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron; and says that Jesus taught violent jihad. In addition to these errors Muhammad also taught that Jesus did not die on the cross.

The death of Jesus is a historical fact, and historians, whether secular or religious, accept it as such. If a Muslim denies the death of Jesus they are denying basic history and you need to point this out. There is no evidence for the Islamic position; all the historical evidence confirms that Jesus died on a cross.

There are many books that examine the historical basis for the life of Jesus, and it is worthwhile reading one of these:

- John Dickson, *The Christ Files*.
- Paul Barnett, *Is the New Testament History?*
- F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents - Are They Reliable?*

But it is more than just history that Islam denies; it also teaches that the death of Jesus is not necessary. Islam teaches that God forgives without a sacrifice. Therefore, just as with the incarnation and Trinity, we need to consider the steps towards the death of Jesus.

Step 1: Sin

Sin is not a big problem in Islam, in fact Allah wants you to sin:

Abu Ayyub Ansari reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: If you were not to commit sins, Allah would have swept you out of existence and would have replaced you by another people who have committed sin, and then asked forgiveness from Allah, and He would have granted them pardon. (*Sahih Muslim*: bk. 37, no. 6621-6622)

Islam teaches that we are born pure and clean from sin. Sin has not corrupted our nature; it is just something we may do. The goal of life is to stay clean. Some people do this well, like the prophets, others not. We sin because God has made us weak and other people lead us astray. What we need is guidance so that we can do the good deeds that will earn Allah's forgiveness and mercy.

However, in the Torah, Prophets, Psalms, and Gospel, sin is a major problem, and God does not want you to sin. It brings physical and spiritual death, corrupts our nature, makes us an object of God's anger, banishes us from his presence, and the history of Israel in the Bible demonstrates that

our deeds fail to save us.

You need to discuss with Muslims what is the nature and effect of sin. Establish that sin has corrupted everyone and made us incapable of saving ourselves.

Step 2: Salvation

Salvation in Islam is about entering paradise and enjoying its pleasures¹. Salvation in Christianity is quite different; it is about entering into the presence of God. These are two different places, and therefore, how we enter them is different.

Talk to your Muslim friend about what heaven/paradise is like. Explain that in the Torah, Prophets, Psalms, and Gospel, it is about coming into God's presence and God dwelling with us. Maybe read and compare with them Qur'an 56:1-39 and Revelation 21-22.

The Old Testament temple demonstrated what is required to approach God. The Holy of Holies was the presence of God, and to approach his presence a sacrifice of atonement for sin needed to be offered by a priest on your behalf. This demonstrates that sin brings death and must be paid for.

Isaiah 53 shows the fulfilment of this sacrifice, and the sacrifice of Abraham shows that God is the one who provides the sacrifice (Genesis 22, Qur'an 37:100-107).

Jesus fulfills this message of the prophets: His death on the cross atones for our sins, he is resurrected and ascended to God, and through him we are, and will be, in the presence of God.

Discuss this message of the prophets with your Muslim friend. If they reject the idea that a sacrifice of atonement is required to approach God then remind them they are rejecting what God has revealed in all the prophets. God chooses how we are to approach him not us.

If they say Allah simply forgives, remind them this is not the case as for two reasons: 1. Allah requires you to do good works and religious ceremonies to earn his forgiveness (4:95-96, 5:9, 11:11, 22:50, 24:26, 34:4, 35:7, 48:29). 2. Allah will increase the weight of your good deeds and reduce the weight of your bad deeds so that when they are placed on the scales you will succeed and earn his forgiveness (4:40, 6:160/161, 27:89, 28:84, 29:7, 39:35, 42:23,46:16). Allah does not simply forgive.

Common Questions

Q1. The death of Jesus is effective for us because we are united to him; what he did he did for us. How are we united to Christ? (Romans 8:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Matthew 26:26-28)

Q2. What would you say to a Muslim who said the following:

- a. Hosea 6:6 says that God does not want a sacrifice for sins: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6, NIV)

¹Muslims will see God on Judgement Day (33:44, 75:22-23) but this is not the doctrine of God dwelling with his people.

- b. Ezekiel 18:20 makes it very clear that one person cannot bear the sins of another: "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. ..." (Ezekiel 18:20, NIV)
- c. ... one of the alleged witnesses, St. Mark, tells us that at the most critical juncture in the life of Jesus - "All his disciples forsook him and fled" - (Mark 14:50). Please ask your Christian friend, "Does all mean all in your language ...?" ... So the so-called "eye-witnesses" are not really eye-witnesses to the happenings ... The reason the disciples of Jesus were afraid was that they had learned by hearsay that their Master was killed by being fastened to the cross - that he was crucified. They had learned by hearsay ... that he had died. (Ahmed Deedat, *Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction?*, ch. 3, pp. 7-8)

PART 2: Video Presentation (21 minutes)

How can we know the death of Jesus happened?

The Gospel Accounts

General History

Muhammad's View of the Death of Jesus - Docetism

Often he (Jesus) did not appear to his disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child. (Gospel of Judas)

But you (Judas) will exceed all of them (the disciples). For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me. (Gospel of Judas, v. 56)

The Savior said to me (Peter), "He whom you saw on the tree (the cross), glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness. But look at him and me." (The Apocalypse of Peter)

A Sacrifice for Sin

THE BIBLE			
Law of Moses	The Prophets	The Psalms	The Gospel
<-----1500 years ----->			
Humanity is created in the image of God.			
The Fatherhood and Son of God			
God dwells and reveals his person to his people.			
The Priesthood and Sacrifice for Sin			
The one story of God's plan of redemption.			

Ezekiel 18:20 - A sacrifice for sin: Ezekiel 40:39, 42:13, 44:29, 45:17, 25.

Union in Islam

Adam in Islam, Qur'an 7:22-25, 7:172, 20:115, Sahih al-Bukhari: Vol. 4, bk. 55, no. 551.

Fasting: Narrated Ibn Abbas: A man came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Apostle! My mother died and she ought to have fasted one month (for her missed Ramadan). Shall I fast on her behalf?" The Prophet replied in the affirmative and said, "Allah's debts have more right to be paid." In another narration a woman is reported to have said, "My sister died..." ... (Sahih al-Bukhari: vol. 3, bk. 31, no. 174)

They will bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection, and also of the burdens of those whom they misled without knowledge. Evil indeed is that which they shall bear! (Qur'an 16:25, Hilali-Khan)

Narrated Abu Musa: Allah's Messenger said: On the Day of Resurrection, my Ummah (nation) will be gathered into three groups. One sort will enter Paradise without rendering an account (of their deeds). Another sort will be reckoned an easy account and admitted into Paradise. Yet another sort will come bearing on their backs heaps of sins like great mountains. Allah will ask the angels though He knows best about them: Who are these people? They will reply: They are humble slaves of yours. He will say: Unload the sins from them and put the same over the Jews and Christians; then let the humble slaves get into Paradise by virtue of My Mercy. This Hadith is sound and mentioned in Mustadrak of Hakim. (*110 Ahadith Qudsi*, trans.: Syed Masood-ul-Hasan, pp. 19-20.)

Tawassul & Istighatha - The intercession of those, dead or alive, who because of their righteousness are able to intercede for you before Allah. (Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller - A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, pp. 933-934)

Common questions

Why do good works?

Narrated Imran bin Husain: A man said, "O Allah's Apostle! Can the people of Paradise be known (differentiated) from the people of the Fire; The Prophet replied, "Yes." The man said, "Why do people (try to) do (good) deeds?" The Prophet said, "Everyone will do the deeds for

which he has been created to do or he will do those deeds which will be made easy for him to do." (i.e. everybody will find easy to do such deeds as will lead him to his destined place for which he has been created). (Sahih al-Bukhari: vol. 8, book 77, no. 595)

God does not want a sacrifice: Hosea 6:6 and Psalm 51:16.

We are born pure and not corrupted by sin.

Paul invented Christianity

God just forgives and does not need a sacrifice. Allah does not just forgive; you must do good works. God determines how to approach him and all the prophets say it is through a sacrifice of atonement.

PART 3: Discussion

Q3. Do you have any comments about the video?

Further Reading: answering-islam.org/Green/union.htm

This is the end of the Engaging with Islam course. If you have found this material helpful please consider making a donation towards the ongoing development of this material. Visit the donation page at engagingwithislam.org/contact-donations/

Answers

Q1. Firstly, the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ; we are spiritually united to him. Secondly, covenants unite parties together, for instance the marriage covenant. By faith in Jesus we enter into the new covenant and are united to him.

Q2a. Hosea 6:6 is rebuking hypocrisy not cancelling the temple and sacrifices.

Q2b. Ezekiel 18:20 is teaching that each individual is responsible for their repentance. The sacrifice for sin still remains in Ezekiel 40:39, 42:13, 44:29, 45:17, 25.

Q2c. The disciples did witness the death of Jesus: Mark 14:50-54, Luke 23:33-49, John 19:16-27.

What to do next?

Now that you have completed this course you may be thinking about what to do next? Here are some suggestions:

- Love God, keep growing as a Christian and learn your doctrine.

- Keep talking to Muslims.
- Join a mission team that is ministering to Muslims.
- Run the *Engaging with Islam* course yourself at your church or university.
- Read some of the recommended books.
- Get familiar with the *Answering Islam* website.
- Request that the persecuted church be regularly prayed for at your church and provide the information for those who pray.